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ABSTRACT

A responsibility of State, regional, and county leaders, planners, and policy makers is achieving the public's desires. However, to formulate plans and policies, several questions pertaining to community preferences and population distribution need analysis. Information on population distribution in North Carolina and the people's community preferences with comparisons to other areas of the United States is presented in this report (part of a series focusing on State needs and goals, community problems and concerns, and the people's values and aspirations). Data were gathered during April and May 1973 from 3,115 household heads, representing a 70 percent response rate from a Statewide sample of 4,470 potential respondents. Questions pertained to respondents' preferences for community size, location, and type of community; their satisfaction with their present living situation; and their willingness to relocate. Findings showed that most North Carolinians prefer to live in nonmetropolitan areas; 17 percent prefer to live more than a 15-minute drive from a city; population and location considerations did not seem to be crucial in selecting a community; and a good place to raise children, quality water, air, schools, health facilities, and job opportunities were of major importance. (NQ)

THROUGH OUR EYES

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volume 4:
community preferences and population distribution

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HIGHLIGHTS

Most North Carolinians prefer to live in non-metropolitan areas. Yet few want to live more than a 15 minute drive from a city. People seem to want the best of both worlds; the services of a city and the spaciousness of the country.

However, population and location considerations do not seem to be crucial in selecting a community within which to live. People want a good place to raise children, quality water, air, schools, and health facilities. Job opportunities are also of great importance. Any size community which could offer these services and opportunities would be the ideal community for most North Carolinians.

by

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COMMUNITY PREFERENCES AND POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Where do people want to live and what kind of communities do they want to live in? These are perplexing questions which face state, regional and county leaders and is of concern to all of us. It is projected that by the year 2000, 70 percent of all the people in the United States will be living in the 12 largest metropolitan areas. Analysis of the 1970 Bureau of Census data shows the continual rise of urbanization and suburbanization. Over two-thirds of the national population now live in metropolitan areas. In North Carolina we perceive a similar trend. Although only 37 percent (1970 Census) of the people in North Carolina reside in metropolitan areas, this is a 69.4 percent increase from the 25 percent which lived in metropolitan areas in 1960.

Planners, developers, environmentalists, politicians, and citizens have different labels for the planning of population distribution. Some have called it "land-use planning," others the "quiet revolution," others "an invasion of personal freedom." Citizens in North Carolina may not have a handle on the different labels but they do have strong feelings about the size and kind of community in which they want to live. In this report we want to assess what the public wants. The means to achieve the public desires is left to the leaders, planners, and policy makers. However, several questions need analysis in order to formulate plans and policies. For example, what size communities do the people want to live in? How near to cities or in what parts of the city do people wish to live? How satisfied are the people in North Carolina with their present living situation? And, in what kind of communities would the people of North Carolina like to live?

These are broad yet significant questions when planning for the future of North Carolina. This report will attempt to provide some answers to these questions and to compare our findings with the preferences of people in other areas of the United States.

Information provided within this report was gathered during April and May 1973 from 3115 heads of households in North Carolina. This represents a 70 percent response rate from a Statewide sample of 4470 potential respondents. More detailed information concerning the sampling procedure, data collection, and comparison of sample characteristics with the population characteristics as provided by the Bureau of the Census is available elsewhere.[1]

COMMUNITY SIZE

In what size of community do the people of North Carolina want to live? In Table 1 (column I, page 6) and in Figure 1 on the next page we can see that 20 percent of North Carolinians want to live in the country; 33 percent want to live in or near small towns; 26 percent want to live in or near small cities (10,000 to 50,000 population); and 21 percent want to live in or near metropolitan areas (50,000 or more population). Overall 7º percent of the people in North Carolina want to live in non-metropolitan areas (cities with less than 50,000 people).

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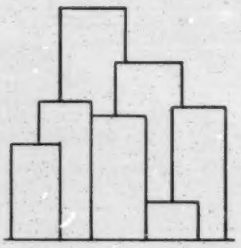
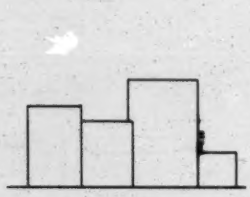
[1] Through Our Eyes is a series of reports focusing on State needs and goals, community problems and concerns, and North Carolinians' values and aspirations. Volume 1: "Peoples Goals and Needs in North Carolina" encompasses a 115 page technical report of Goals and Needs for the State as a whole and for seventeen regions throughout the State. Detailed information of how the study was conducted is available in this report. Volume 2 is a 24 page popular version of the longer 115 page report. Additional information or questions concerning this or earlier reports can be made to the author.

figure 1: where north carolinians want to live



metropolitan

21%



small cities

26%

small towns

33%

the country

20%

Table 1: Peoples preference for community size.

	I	II	III	IV	V
Non-Metropolitan Areas	North Carolina 1973	Arizona 1973[a]	Washington 1971[b]	Wisconsin 1971[c]	United States 1973[d]
In the country.....	20%	11%[e]	14%[e]	35%	33%
In or near a small town (under 10,000 people).....	33%	15%	19%	26%	19%
In or near a small city (10,000-50,000 people).....	26%	25%	29%	18%	22%
Sub-total	(79%)	(51%)	(62%)	(79%)	(75%)
Metropolitan Areas[f]					
In or near a metropolitan area (50,000 or more).....	21%	48%	38%	21%	25%
TOTAL	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

[a]Data used with permission of author E. J. Carpenter, Arizona State University.

[b]Don A. Dillman and Russell Dobash, 1972 "Preferences for community living and their implications for population redistribution" Washington State Agriculture Experiment Station Bulletin No. 764.

[c]Zuiches, James, 1972. "Residential preferences: Implications for population redistribution in non-metropolitan areas." In U. S. Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Population, Distribution and Policy. Sara Mills Mazie, (ed.), Vol. V of Commission Research Reports.

[d]Fugitt, Glenn V. and James J. Zuiches. 1973 "Residential Preferences and population distribution: Results of a national survey." Paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society.

[e]Question states in rural areas or towns less than 2,500 people.

[f]This category had more than one breakdown. For example, 3 percent of the 21 percent (Column I) wanted to live in areas of 200,000 or more. Other states had other categories but not comparable with North Carolina. Thus, only one category was used for metropolitan areas.

This strong desire to live in non-metropolitan areas is not unique to North Carolina. In the State of Wisconsin (Table 1, column IV) a similar desire is expressed to similarly worded questions from a statewide survey. Arizona (Table 1, column II) and Washington (column III) present a slightly lower preference, yet well above 50 percent. The results for North Carolina are similar to what people feel all across the United States as indicated in the final study reported (Table 1, column V). In the 1973 National study 75 percent indicated a preference for non-metropolitan living while 25 percent expressed a preference for living in a metropolitan area.

Are people living where they want to live? In North Carolina the majority of the people are. We see in Table 2 that 53 percent of those living on farms want to live in the country and 88 percent of those living on farms want to live in the country or near a town with less than 10,000 people.

Table 2: Relation between where people presently live and where they would like to live.

	WHERE PRESENTLY LIVE			
Community preference	On a farm (447)[a]	In a town less 10,000 (1008)	In a small city 10,000 - 50,000 (717)	In a city over 50,000 (754)
In the country.....	(53%)	20%	11%	10%
In or near a town less than 10,000...	35%	(56%)	20%	12%
In a small city 10,000 to 50,000...	8%	18%	(55%)	20%
In a metropolitan area over 50,000...	4%	6%	14%	(58%)
TOTAL	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)

[a]Number of respondents in each category. This number will vary slightly because of non-response.

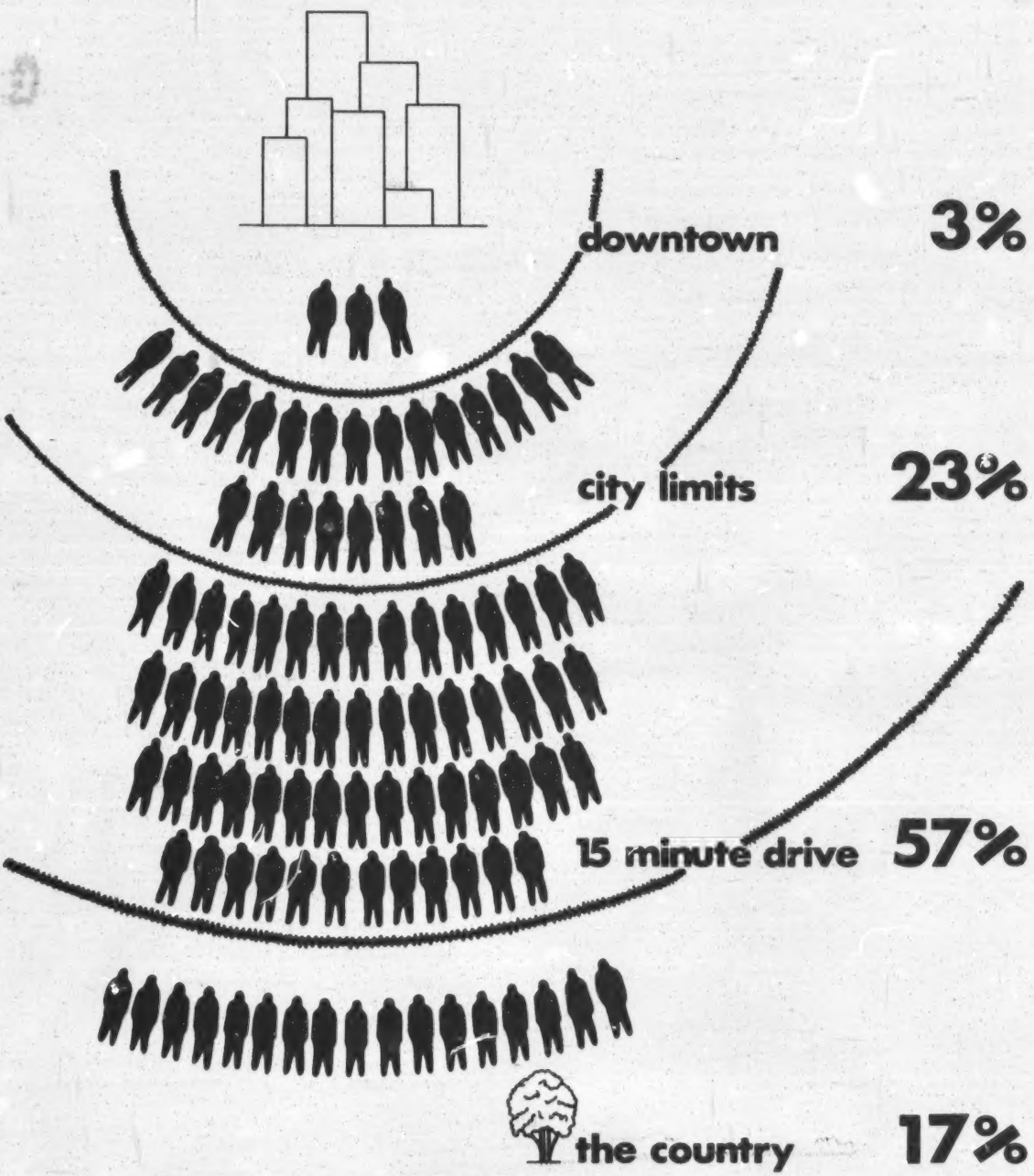
Likewise 58 percent of the people living in cities with a population of over 50,000 want to live in a metropolitan area of this size. However, 22 percent of the people living in metropolitan areas (50,000 population or more) would like to live in the country or in or near a small town. And a total of 42 percent would rather live in non-metropolitan areas. Only 4 percent of those living on farms and 6 percent of those living in small towns want to live in metropolitan areas. In general, most respondents are living where they want to live in accordance with their preferences. However, a trend is apparent for living in non-metropolitan areas.

When the people in North Carolina were asked where they wanted to live in terms of location to a city, only 17 percent wanted to live more than a 15 minute drive from a city (see Figure 2 on next page and Table 3). The majority (57 percent) wanted to live outside the city limits but within a 15 minute drive. Analysis of the 1971 State of Washington data presents a similar picture. Here again only 17 percent of the respondents from a statewide survey in Washington want to live more than a 15 minute drive from a city. However, in the Washington study 36 percent wanted to live within

Table 3: Percentage of respondents indicating where they would like to live.

Location preference	North Carolina 1973	Washington 1971
Near downtown.....	3%	5%
Away from downtown but within city limits..	23%	31%
Outside city limits but within a 15 minute drive.....	57%	47%
Outside city limits with more than 15 minute drive.....	17%	17%

figure 2: location preference



the city limits while in North Carolina only 26 percent want to live within the city limits. In both studies, 5 percent or less want to live near the downtown area. It seems that most people want the benefits of the city but do not want to live in the city.

Are people content with their communities or would they like to move elsewhere? When we put this question to North Carolinians, 16 percent said they would never consider leaving their community and 62 percent said they would be reluctant to leave (Table 4). Overall 78 percent wanted to stay in their community. Approximately 12 percent indicated a preference to move

Table 4: Percentage of respondents indicating their attitude toward moving from their community.

Attitude toward moving away	North Carolina 1973	Washington 1971	Arizona 1973
I would never consider leaving here...	16%	9%	9%
I would move to another community if I had to but would be reluctant to leave here.....	62%	60%	55%
It makes no difference to me whether I live here or in another community..	10%	12%	13%
I would probably be more satisfied living in another community.....	6%	10%	11%
I would really like to leave this community if I had the opportunity...	6%	8%	11%

elsewhere and 10 percent were indifferent. The results in North Carolina are somewhat similar to data from the states of Washington and Arizona. In Washington 69 percent and in Arizona 64 percent wanted to stay in their communities. People in North Carolina seem a bit more content with their communities. But all three states demonstrate the lack of desire of most people to move away.

Are people in rural areas or people in urban areas more willing to leave their community? Overall, most people in both rural and urban areas indicate that they would be reluctant to move away (Table 5). Farmers seemed to be the most reluctant to move. Ninety four percent want to remain where they are. Only 3 percent express a desire to move to a new location. Approximately 70 percent of those living in metropolitan areas with 50,000 or more people wanted to remain in their communities. However, this category did show the highest proportion of people (18 percent) who would like to move to a new

Table 5: Relation between where people live and their desire to remain in that community.

	WHERE PRESENTLY LIVE			
Attitude toward moving	Farm (447)	Town less than 10,000 (1008)	Town 10,000-49,999 (717)	City 50,000+ (754)
Be reluctant to move away..	94%	78%	75%	70%
Indifferent.....	3%	11%	12%	12%
Would like to move away....	3%	11%	13%	18%

location if presented with the opportunity. It seems that the more rural the location where people live, the less they desire to move to another locality.

The next logical question is what size of community do those who wish to move desire? Approximately 12 percent of the respondents from North Carolina indicate a desire to move (see Table 4). Of this 12 percent or 350 respondents, 4 percent are living on farms, 31 percent are living in or near a town of less than 10,000 population, 26 percent are living in small cities of 10,000 to 50,000 population, and 40 percent are living in metropolitan areas of 50,000 or more. We can see in Table 6 that approximately 70 percent of those who desire to move, want to move to non-metropolitan areas. However, since 60 percent of those who expressed a desire to move were from non-metropolitan areas this indicates only a net gain of 10 percent. In short, there is a slight trend for those who desire to move away from their community to show a preference for non-metropolitan areas. However, by no means, do all people willing to move, desire non-metropolitan communities.

Table 6: Community preference for those who desire to move.

Size of community preferred	Want to move
In the country.....	18%
In or near a small town (less than 10,000 people).....	26%
In or near a small city (10,000 to 50,000 people).....	25%
In or near a metropolitan area (50,000 or more people).....	31%

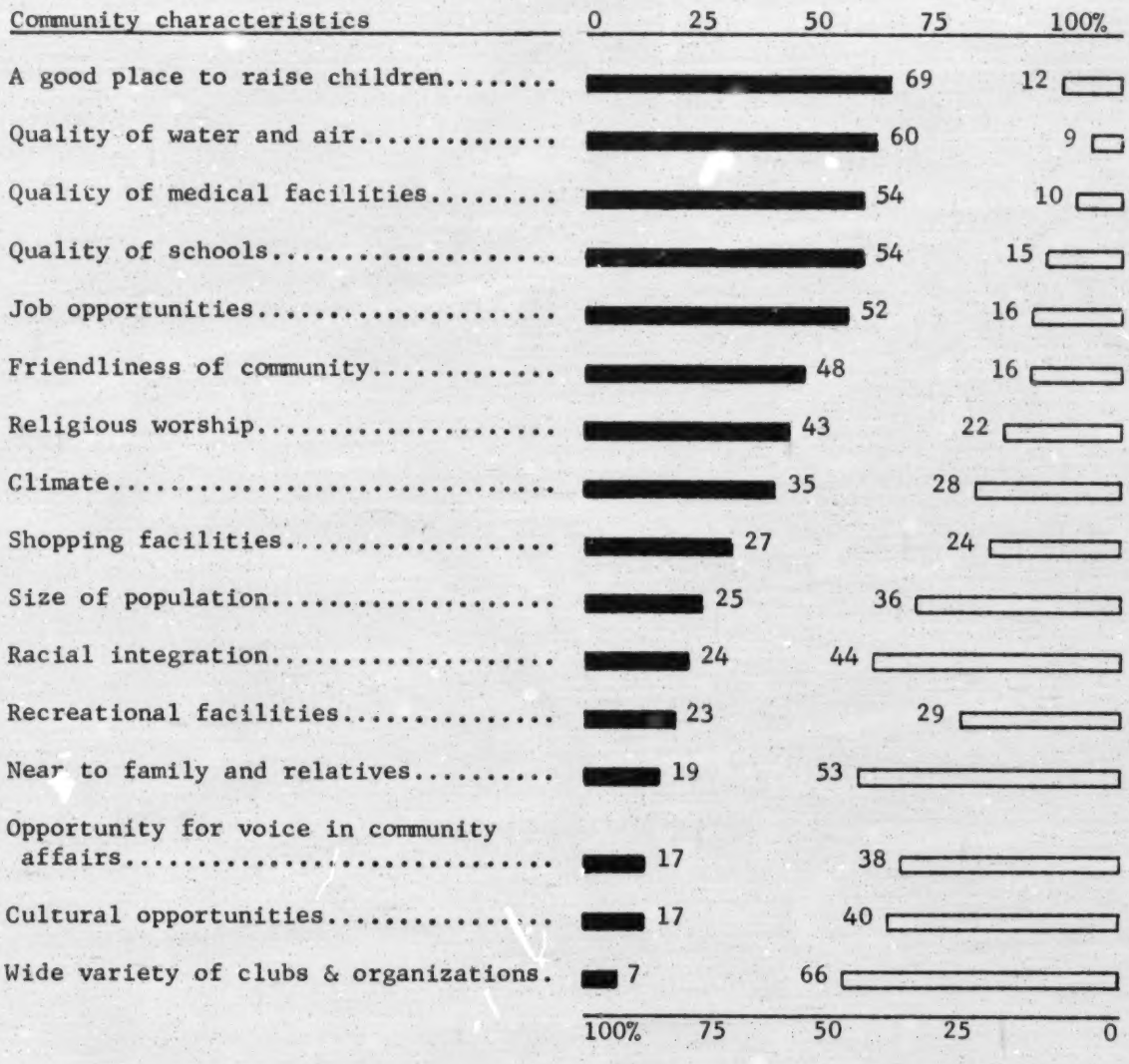
So what does this tell us about North Carolinians' living preferences? First, three out of four people do not want to live in metropolitan areas. Second, while most people do not want to live in metropolitan areas over 50 percent want to live within a 15 minute drive of a city. Third, most people are living where they want to. And fourth, most people would be reluctant to leave their community. In summary, the people of North Carolina seem to prefer their small town, rural way of life. The increased loss of population during the past 10 years from the rural areas of North Carolina to the more metropolitan areas seems to be more a result of necessity rather than desire.

KINDS OF COMMUNITY WHICH PEOPLE WANT

We have discussed the size and location of communities within which people want to live and their attitudes about moving away from their communities. Now, let's explore the kinds of communities within which people want to live.

Table 7 shows that the most important considerations when selecting a community in which to live include: a good place to raise children, the quality of water, air, medical facilities, schools, job opportunities, and friendliness of the community. Less than 10 percent of the people in North Carolina feel that these were of slight or of no importance when selecting a community in which to live. Considerations also of importance include: religious worship, climate, and shopping facilities. The other items included in Table 7 seem of much less importance. Over 40 percent indicated that cultural opportunities, racial integration, nearness to family and relatives, or a wide variety of clubs and organizations were of slight or no importance when selecting a community.

Table 7: Percentage of North Carolina residents indicating the importance of the following when selecting a community in which to live.


Community characteristics
0 25 50 75 100%
A good place to raise children..... 69 12
Quality of water and air..... 60 9
Quality of medical facilities..... 54 10
Quality of schools..... 54 15
Job opportunities..... 52 16
Friendliness of community..... 48 16
Religious worship..... 43 22
Climate..... 35 28
Shopping facilities..... 27 24
Size of population..... 25 36
Racial integration..... 24 44
Recreational facilities..... 23 29
Near to family and relatives..... 19 53
Opportunity for voice in community affairs..... 17 38
Cultural opportunities..... 17 40
Wide variety of clubs & organizations. 7 66
100% 75 50 25 0

Question: If you had the opportunity to choose the community in which you would live, how important would the following characteristics be in making your decision?

Responses: None, Slight, Moderate, Great.

■ of great importance

□ of no or of slight importance

Do people in smaller and more rural communities have different preferences than people which live in larger or more urban areas? When we broke the state sample down according to size of communities we found no apparent differences in the kinds of communities in which people want to live. Those in rural areas have much the same preferences as those in urban areas.

In Table 8, we see that those in more rural areas (on farms or in towns of 10,000 or less people) place a slightly higher priority on the friendliness of the community, on religious worship, on the size of the population, and on nearness to family and relatives. People in more urban areas place a slightly higher priority on job opportunities. But overall the same community characteristics are important to both rural and urban people.

Differences were more apparent when comparing people along different levels of income. Here again we must not lose sight of the overall similarity in the public high concern for the first several items. In Table 9 we can see that those of lower income consider religious worship and nearness to family and friends more important than those of higher levels of income when selecting a community in which to live. The friendliness of the community and shopping facilities were also slightly more important to those in lower income brackets. Those of upper income seemed a bit more concerned about quality of schools, size of population and whether the community was a good place to raise children. Comparisons were also conducted between whites and non-whites but differences were slight and thus not included in this report.

Table 8: Percentage of North Carolina residents according to size of community indicating that the following characteristics are of great importance to them in selecting a community in which to live.

Community characteristics	Farm (445)	Town Less than 10,000 (991)	City 10,000 50,000 (712)	Metro-politan Area 50,000+ (753)	Percent Variation
A good place to raise children.....	72%	71%	74%	71%	*
Quality of water and air.....	61	62	63	63	*
Quality of medical facilities.....	54	59	57	52	*
Quality of schools.....	52	58	58	57	*
Job opportunities.....	48	53	56	57	+ 9
Friendliness of community.....	54	53	49	44	-10
Religious worship.....	54	50	39	35	-19
Climate.....	38	36	33	38	*
Shopping facilities.....	26	28	26	28	*
Size of population.....	30	27	25	23	- 7
Racial integration.....	28	24	23	24	*
Recreational facilities.....	20	26	24	25	*
Near to family and relatives.....	25	19	20	16	- 9
Opportunity for voice in community affairs.....	18	19	18	16	*
Cultural opportunities.....	15	17	20	18	*
Wide variety of clubs and organizations.....	11	10	10	8	*

*This indicates that percent variation between the categories is less than 5 percent or that no apparent trend is observable. A (+) indicates of greater concern to urban areas and a (-) indicates of greater concern to rural areas.

Table 9: Percentage of North Carolina residents according to level of income indicating that the following characteristics are of great importance to them in selecting a community in which to live.

Community characteristics	Family Income: Less than $6,000 (649)	$6,000 to $14,999 (1496)	$15,000 or more (700)	Percent Variation
A good place to raise children.....	65%	74%	75%	+10
Quality of water and air.....	62	63	64	*
Quality of medical facilities.....	58	56	54	*
Quality of schools.....	48	58	62	+14
Job opportunities.....	51	57	52	*
Friendliness of community.....	56	49	46	-10
Religious worship.....	57	43	34	-23
Climate.....	38	35	37	*
Shopping facilities.....	37	26	23	-14
Size of population.....	19	27	28	+ 9
Racial integration.....	27	24	22	*
Recreational facilities.....	24	23	26	*
Near to family and relatives.....	32	18	11	-21
Opportunity for voice in community affairs.....	20	17	17	*
Cultural opportunities.....	19	16	18	*
Wide variety of clubs and organizations.....	13	8	10	*

*This indicates that percent variation between the categories is less than 5 percent or that no apparent trend is observable. A (+) indicates of greater concern to those of higher income and a (-) indicates of greater concern to those of lower income.

When we look at community preferences according to different age groupings we see the greatest variations. Younger heads of households (those under 40 years of age) seem to be more concerned than older heads of household in selecting a community which provides a good place to raise children, the quality of schools, and job opportunities. Older heads of households are more concerned about religious worship, climate, nearness to family and relatives and, to a less extent, concerned about quality of medical facilities, shopping facilities and the friendliness of communities.

In summary, the first six items appear to be the major considerations for all segments of the people in North Carolina when selecting a community within which to live. These items include: a good place to raise children, quality of water and air, quality of medical facilities, quality of schools, job opportunities, and the friendliness of the community. Younger heads of households are particularly concerned with providing a quality environment and schools for their children, and these younger heads of households along with those of lower levels of income are particularly concerned with the job opportunities which a community might offer. Older heads of households are more concerned about health related considerations (quality of water and air, health facilities, and climate). Older heads of households along with people in more rural areas and people of lower income place greater emphasis on the friendliness of a community and religious worship. It is interesting to note that the size of a communities' population is not one of the major considerations when selecting a place to live.

Table 10: Percentage of North Carolina residents according to age groupings indicating that the following characteristics are of great importance to them in selecting a community in which to live.

Community characteristics	Age - Head of household: Less than 40 (1173)	40 to 59 (1232)	60 or more (590)	Percent Variation
A good place to raise children.....	81%	70%	57%	-24
Quality of water and air.....	61	64	64	*
Quality of medical facilities.....	52	57	63	+11
Quality of schools.....	64	56	43	-21
Job opportunities.....	62	53	39	-23
Friendliness of community.....	48	48	57	+ 9
Religious worship.....	34	50	55	+21
Climate.....	29	38	49	+20
Shopping facilities.....	24	28	35	+11
Size of population.....	27	26	25	*
Racial integration.....	25	23	27	*
Recreational facilities.....	27	22	22	*
Near to family and relatives.....	14	19	33	+19
Opportunity for voice in community affairs.....	16	19	20	*
Cultural opportunities.....	15	18	23	+ 8
Wide variety of clubs and organizations.....	8	9	14	+ 6

*This indicates that percent variation between the categories is less than 5 percent or that no apparent trend is observable. A (+) indicates of greater concern to older heads of households and a (-) indicates of greater concern to younger heads of households.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Where will the next generation of North Carolinians live? Will the rural population continue to decline leaving dying small towns throughout the State? Will the publics' preference for location near to cities yet lack of preference to live within cities precipitate the decay of central cities and stimulate urban sprawl? These are crucial questions which leaders wrestle with today.

From national demographic population data we can document two streams of migration (see Fuguitt and Zuiches, footnote page 6). The first is the exodus of people from agricultural and rural areas to metropolitan areas. The second is the movement of people from large urban centers to suburbs. This seems to describe the objective situation in North Carolina. Data from North Carolina indicates that only 4 percent of the people in North Carolina want to live near or in the downtown area of metropolitan areas. Likewise only 30 percent want to live within city limits. Over 50 percent want to live outside the city limits but within a 15 minute drive. Although three out of four people do not want to live in metropolitan areas, only 17 percent want to live more than a 15 minute drive from a city. Clearly the people want the best of both the rural and urban environment. Most prefer small town living but close to the conveniences which cities can provide.

However, this preference for size and location must be considered in light of two other major findings. First, population is not a major

criteria for selecting a community within which to live. The most important considerations focus on good environment and quality schools for children, quality air, water and medical facilities, job opportunities, and friendliness of the community. Second, over 75 percent of the public is reluctant to move and those who do want to move express a preference for a community approximately the same size as where they are presently living.

Several implications can be drawn from this. If leaders and planners in North Carolina want to slow the flow of people to the cities and suburbs, incentives are needed to keep people from moving to urban areas. The most important incentives seem to be providing quality schools and health services along with job opportunities. These considerations seem to outweigh the relative importance of population considerations when selecting a community within which to live. Second, the community preferences of people in rural areas is approximately the same as the community preferences of people in urban areas. The same five characteristics are crucial to all segments of the population; those of lower and higher income levels, whites and non-whites, young and old, and those in rural areas and those in urban areas. Third, only 3 percent of those living on farms expressed a desire to move. It seems then that the dwindling farm population is not due to preference but to other considerations. Further research is needed to find out precisely why people are leaving the farm for the city. Finally, twice as many people (35%) are living in metropolitan areas than prefer (18%) to live in metropolitan areas. Further research and thought is needed on why people do not wish to live in metropolitan areas.

Policies can be initiated but will likely be ineffective if the preferences of the people are not taken into account. The information provided

here hopefully will document for leaders, planners, and all concerned with population distribution what the public wants. Hopefully this report can stimulate thought and discussion in planning for the future of North Carolina.